

THE DETERIORATING SITUATION IN VENEZUELA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SIREs) for 30 minutes.

Mr. SIREs. Mr. Speaker, I want to take this moment to thank my colleague and my chairman of the Western Hemisphere Subcommittee for always being present on all the important issues, human rights issues in the Western Hemisphere.

And of course, I want to thank my colleague from Florida, ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN, for her passion and determination to bring democracy to Venezuela.

Before I recognize my good friend from Florida, MARIO DIAZ-BALART, I would just like to say that Venezuela basically has taken a page out of the Castro brothers. This is how the process in Cuba started. Fifty-five years later, there is nothing but oppression, no freedom of expression, no election, and, quite frankly, there are approximately about 30,000 Cubans in Venezuela running the security apparatus.

But I want the Venezuelan people to know that we are fighting along with them, that we are talking to all the Presidents, all the leaders in the Western Hemisphere, to put pressure on Venezuela to develop the democracy and stop the abuse of human rights in Venezuela.

At this time, I yield to my good friend from Florida (Mr. DIAZ-BALART), who is also a fighter for human rights and who has been always in the forefront of human rights in the Western Hemisphere.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Mr. Speaker, let me first start by thanking the leadership, the steadfast, never confused leadership of Congressman ALBIO SIREs. He is a man who I have had the privilege of traveling with to Eastern Europe, where he is known there, as he is in the United States, for one who is always fighting for those who are repressed, oppressed around the world; which is why the people of Venezuela know that they can count on Congressman ALBIO SIREs for his leadership.

Thank you, sir, for never giving up, never fighting, never forgetting those who are struggling under repression. You mentioned Congresswoman ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN. She is a giant, a giant in the Halls of Congress, a giant for not only things that obviously affect us here domestically, because she is fighting for those, particularly those who are the least fortunate in our society.

But if there is somebody who is known internationally as a fighter for those who, again, are struggling for freedom, it is ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN.

I thank you also, Mr. SIREs, for mentioning the chairman of the Western Hemisphere Subcommittee. We just heard from him, a person who, again, is on the same track of always making sure that the—he makes the United States look good by never forgetting

human rights as a fundamental pillar of our foreign policy.

The people of Venezuela are demonstrating that they are, in fact, the heirs of Simon Bolivar. They are showing now, with 50 days of consecutive demonstrations in the streets, that they are not willing to accept repression. They are not willing to accept any more of this dictatorship; that they are not willing to accept, as Mr. SIREs mentioned, in essence, a takeover from the Cuban regime of their beautiful country of Venezuela.

And they are suffering because of that activism, that bravery of hitting the streets. About almost 50 of them have been murdered since this last number of demonstrations have taken place, not to mention the dozens upon dozens of political prisoners, whether it is political leaders, mayors, et cetera, who are in prison just because they are not willing to stand by while their country has been taken over by this horrendous, narco-terrorist, murderous dictatorship.

Frankly, I am here to commend the Venezuelan people and, as Mr. SIREs said, to let them know that they are not alone, that we stand with them, that the United States Congress stands with them.

But I would be remiss if I didn't end as I started, Mr. Speaker, by thanking these individuals who have spoken already: the giant of human rights in the House of Representatives, ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN, the chairman of the subcommittee, who never gets confused, and who is always fighting for those who are struggling to regain or gain their freedom; and yes, ALBIO SIREs, who I have had the privilege of seeing, not only who he is recognized here in this Congress by his colleagues as a true freedom fighter for human rights, but I have been able to travel with him and see that whenever you go anywhere with ALBIO SIREs, he is also recognized around the world as that champion for freedom.

So what a privilege to be part of and to be able to spend this time with you. Thanks to each and every one of you for not forgetting the struggle of Venezuela. I know that you have done it in your committee, you have done it in your subcommittee, and this Congress is grateful, and this Member of Congress is grateful for your leadership.

And I know that the Venezuelan people who are showing incredible bravery know, and history will record that, in their toughest moments, when they were putting their lives on the line, all of you, and this Congress, stood with them.

So with that, thank you, Mr. SIREs, for yielding to me.

Mr. SIREs. Thank you, Congressman. Thank you for all your passion and all your effort on behalf of those people who need it the most, the people in Venezuela.

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to end by saying, you know, I remember years ago when Spain went through 39 years

of dictatorships in the Franco era. And one of the things that happened that was able to develop democracy in Spain was the fact that all the European countries got together and helped and assisted in developing a democracy in Spain. I think the same thing needs to happen in this region.

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The countries of our Venezuela have to demand that Venezuela release its political prisoners, that it has free elections, and stop the human rights abuses. After all, it is in their best interest that a stable Venezuela is good for a stable region.

Mr. Speaker, I thank very much my colleague, ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN, always for her passion on this issue. She is the little giant of human rights in this Congress. I thank her and my colleague, MARIO DIAZ-BALART.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 8 o'clock and 2 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, May 24, 2017, at 10 a.m. for morning-hour debate.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 2 of rule XIV, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

1410. A letter from the Assistant General Counsel for Regulatory Services, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Department of Education, transmitting the Department's Major final priorities, requirements, definitions, and selection criteria — Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy (SRCL) Program [CFDA Number: 84.371C.] [Docket ID: ED-2015-OESE-0129] (RIN: 1810-AB25) received May 19, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

1411. A letter from the Acting Under Secretary, Bureau of Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting Transmittal No. DDTC 16-011, pursuant to Section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

1412. A letter from the Acting Under Secretary, Bureau of Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting Transmittal No. DDTC 16-043, pursuant to Section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

1413. A letter from the Acting Under Secretary, Bureau of Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting Transmittal No. DDTC 15-132, pursuant to Section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

1414. A letter from the Acting Chief Executive Officer, Corporation for National and Community Service, transmitting the Corporation's FY 2016 No FEAR Act report, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 2301 note; Public Law 107-174, 203(a) (as amended by Public Law 109-435, Sec. 604(f)); (120 Stat. 3242); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.